



**King County**

**Rod Dembowski**

Councilmember, District 1

**Metropolitan King County Council**

Dear Neighbor,

Thank you for taking the time to read my first Report to Constituents, a summary of the work I have been doing since taking office in February. I am honored to serve you, and I think it is important that I take the time to update you on the work I am doing on the King County Council.

As you will see in the Report, I have been working hard to grow our economy, improve transit and transportation, invest in human services, promote justice and equality, and protect our environment.

We are going to continue to work on important legislation, including a Youth Action Plan, a Low Income Fare for Metro Transit, and the King County budget for 2014. I look forward to updating you on these and other issues in the months ahead.

I hope you enjoy this report, I expect to make it a regular report to constituents. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns at (206) 477-1001 or at [rod.dembowski@kingcounty.gov](mailto:rod.dembowski@kingcounty.gov).

Very Truly Yours,

Rod Dembowski  
King County Councilmember  
District One



## District 1 Report to Constituents

A summary of Councilmember Dembowski's first six months representing King County Council, District 1

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*Rod with youth at the "Renway" Boys and Girls Club*

# Introduction

On February 11 2013, Rod Dembowski was unanimously selected by the members of the King County Council to fill the District 1 seat, which was left vacant following Bob Ferguson's election as Washington State's Attorney General.

This Report to Constituents provides information on Rod's work on the King County Council during the first 6 months in office as well as his priorities and accomplishments, including his community outreach efforts.

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# Priorities and Accomplishments

Rod lightheartedly refers to King County as a “hidden government,” because people are often unclear about the role, function, and jurisdiction of King County. In reality, the County has significant responsibilities and far reaching impacts on the day-to-day lives of everyone who lives in, works in, or visits King County. King County is the region’s government. As such, it oversees Metro Transit, the county district court system, the county adult and juvenile detention facilities, human services, solid waste, wastewater treatment, and many more services and resources. Additionally, the county serves as the local government in unincorporated King County where it provides local government services like roads, public safety, and permitting.

## Work on the King County Council

No member of the King County Council serves on more Committees than Councilmember Dembowski, and Rod has a perfect, 100% voting record on those committees and on the Council. He has not missed a single vote. In fact, in the six months Rod has been in office, Rod has missed only a single meeting, of the Regional Water Quality Committee, which conflicted with a day of action in Olympia. As Chair of the Regional Transit Committee, Rod met with legislators to advocate for a Transportation Package.



Rod and his boys Evan and Camden at Rod's swearing in.

## Regional Transit Committee, Chair

Rod serves as Chair of the Regional Transit Committee (“RTC”), which reviews and makes recommendations to the King County Council on countywide policies for public transportation services. As a regional body, the Regional Transit Committee is comprised of County Councilmembers, Seattle City Councilmembers, and mayors and councilmembers from cities throughout King County. This broad membership ensures that King County and its regional partners have a forum to collaborate and develop policy guidance for Metro.

The major policy undertaking for the committee is Metro Transit's Strategic Plan for Public Transportation 2011-2021, which calls for updates every two

## ROD'S COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:

- Regional Transit Committee, Chair
- Transportation, Economy and Environment
- Law, Justice, Health and Human Services
- Government Accountability and Oversight
- Committee of the Whole
- Regional Water Quality
- King County Ferry District, Executive Committee
- King County Flood District



The July 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the RTC was held at Shoreline Community College. In this picture, Metro Transit General Manager Kevin Desmond is giving his latest update to committee members.

years. This was the first year the Strategic Plan was updated.

The Strategic Plan is the policy blueprint for Metro Transit (the state's largest transit agency). Updates to the plan are a delicate balancing act, ensuring that the interests of communities from throughout the region are considered. As chair, it is Rod's responsibility to strike that balance.

Over a several month process the committee successfully collaborated with staff and constituents to make sure everyone's voice was heard and that the updates to the Strategic Plan met as many needs as possible. In the end, the 13-member committee unanimously voted for all updates to the Strategic Plan. Click [here](#) to learn more.

## Health and Human Services

Unfortunately, during an economic downturn, human services are often the first to be cut, and King County has been no exception. An annual general fund budget of once over \$26 million dollars has been cut to under \$2 million. For this reason, one of Councilmember Dembowski's top priorities in office is increasing funding for human services and to make the smartest investments possible with the limited funding available. So far Rod has:

- Acted as Council's designee to the [Mental Illness and Drug Dependency Oversight Committee](#), which allocates funds to assist people struggling with mental illness and chemical dependency, and help them secure proper treatment;
- Sponsored [MIDD's 5<sup>th</sup> Annual report](#), which provides information on the more than 30,000 people in 2012 who were helped by programs that are in part funded by MIDD;
- Helped author a letter to the state legislature, urging them to stop the draconian cuts to mental health funding, as proposed in the State Senate budget, which was signed by the County Executive and all Councilmembers;
- Helped author a letter to the state legislature, urging against cuts for health and human services;
- Voted to ensure an updated [Emergency Medical Services Levy](#) would be put before the King County voters;
- Co-sponsored legislation to ensure [pay equity](#) for all King County employees serving in the uniformed services; and
- Authored an amendment to the King County Transformation Panel, which, acknowledged the funding crisis of health and human services and declining unrestricted general fund resources.

Looking ahead, Rod is working on a major policy proposal to prioritize and invest in a children and families agenda to advance the health and potential of all King County children and families.

### Redmond Councilmember and RTC Vice Chair Kim Allen:

*"On behalf of the Sound Cities RTC caucus, we deeply appreciate the excellent staff collaboration and Chair Dembowski's leadership on issues like park-and-ride capacity and access that are vital to our growing member cities. We remain committed to working in partnership with the King County Council and the City of Seattle to shape our transit system to meet the needs of our growing ridership."*



Rod and CM Gossett at the "Renway" Boys and Girls Club.



Rod on a tour of the International Community Health Services (ICHS).

## Veterans

As the son of a Korean War Veteran, supporting the men and women who have served this county is very important to Rod. Along with Councilmember Pete von Reichbauer, Rod led a recognition commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Korean War Armistice at the July 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the King County Council. Dozens of veterans and Korean American Community leaders took part in the commemoration. Young Wan Song, Consul General of the Republic of Korea in Seattle, took part in the ceremony and presented Ambassador of Peace Medals to several Korean War Veterans in attendance. Rod's father Al Dembowski, also received a medal in gratitude for his service.

On Memorial Day Rod honored our veterans by speaking at the Memorial Day ceremonies of Acacia Memorial Park and Evergreen Washelli. [Here](#) is some additional information on this emotional day.

Finally, Rod co-sponsored legislation to ensure pay equity for all King County employees serving in the uniformed services. It is crucial that our service members are treated equally and fairly while they defend our nation.



Pictures from the Commemoration of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Korean War Armistice.



LTC Corey L. Crosbie, Al Dembowski, and Rod on Memorial Day.



The Color Guard at the Memorial Day event at Evergreen Washelli.

## Protecting our Parks and the Environment

We live in one of the most beautiful areas of the world, and thanks to the 200 parks, 175 miles of regional trails, and 26,000 acres of open space in our King County Park System, we have access to enjoy, explore, and have fun in our “big backyard.” In order to protect our treasured natural resources, Councilmember Dembowski voted to put a Parks Levy on King County’s August 6<sup>th</sup> ballot, which voters approved with more than 70% of the vote.

The Parks Levy included amendments, co-sponsored by Councilmember Dembowski, which will:

- Increase the frequency of the Parks Levy Citizens Oversight Board’s report from biennial to annual, making the levy more transparent and responsive to changing needs;
- Require that in addition to the King County Executive and the King County Council, the report would be delivered to the Regional Policy Committee (RPC). Reporting to the RPC ensures the inclusion of cities throughout the region in the annual reporting process; and
- Require annual reporting on the progress and maintenance of the system, including reporting on noxious weed control.

Rod is also partnering with Forterra and fellow Councilmembers on an exciting project to protect some of the last old growth forest in King County and spur economic development along Highway 2.

## Restructuring Public Defense

One of the more complicated issues to come before the King County Council in years is the restructuring of the County’s public defense system. The restructuring came about after a recent ruling by the Washington State Supreme Court which held that employees of the County’s four non-profit, independent, public defense agencies, that have provided public defense services on behalf of King County for forty years, are entitled to the same benefits as County employees. Under the resulting settlement, the employees of the nonprofit agencies became County employees July 1, 2013.

On July 1, the County Council unanimously adopted an ordinance sending an amendment to the King County Charter to the voters, which would make permanent the King County Department of Public Defense. If approved by voters, the new Department would be headed by an appointed County Public Defender who would run a department of over 350 public defenders and staff.

Rod brought his legal experience to the conversation taking place around the interim ordinance and charter amendment ordinance. He sponsored and passed two major amendments preserving key elements of our nationally recognized and respected public defense system. These amendments include:

- Creation of the Criminal Justice Reform Advisory Task Force to issue a report on the use of outside entities to perform public defense-related

### Addressing one of the Dembowski Amendments to the Parks Levy, Kenmore Mayor David Baker stated:

*“This amendment will ensure additional, appropriate focus on maintenance needs at King County Parks, including the Burke-Gilman Trail.”*



Rod with Finn Hill Neighborhood Alliance Volunteers at the Juanita Woodlands work party.



Rod with Charlie Raines of the Sierra Club, learning about the last unprotected old growth forest in King County.



*“King County public defenders have been key participants in justice system reform efforts of concern to immigrant and refugee communities, including developing diversion strategies that do not trigger deportation proceedings; engaging in police reform efforts; and calling attention to the need to re-examine practices with relation to ICE detainees,” said Jorge L. Barón, Executive Director of Northwest Immigrant Rights Project. “We welcome that the changes proposed by Councilmember Dembowski and adopted by the full Council today will ensure that future public defenders will continue to have a role in these and other important justice reform efforts.”*

services that promote system efficiencies and improvements of the County's public defense system through innovative approaches to criminal justice reform; and

- An amendment requiring the Department of Public Defense to foster and promote system improvements, efficiencies, access to justice and equity in the criminal justice system.

Click [here](#) and [here](#) for information on the Dembowski Amendments.

## Protecting the Community

Approximately 75% of [King County's general fund](#) is dedicated to public safety. These funds go to the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, the Office of Public Defense, the King County courts, the King County jail and the Sheriff's Office, which is the longest serving law enforcement agency in King County. Immediately after taking office Rod set up meetings with King County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Satterberg and King County Sheriff John Urquhart, to discuss ways he could support and help their offices. Rod began work partnering with the Sheriff's Office on boat safety legislation.

There are over 33 miles of shoreline in District 1. It is imperative that our waters are as safe as possible for recreation, and to do so we have to equip our local public safety officials with the tools necessary to enforce water safety.

The King County Sheriff's Office Marine Unit, which patrols Puget Sound, Lake Washington, Lake Sammamish, and many other small lakes and rivers, does not have express authority to impound watercraft or vessels belonging to drivers who are boating under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or upon finding a drifting or unattended vessel. Rod sponsored legislation to give our deputies the authority to impound watercraft when making an arrest, or when a vessel cannot be otherwise secured or released to a person who can safely operate the watercraft.

## Supporting Workers

Rod has demonstrated a commitment to supporting the rights of working men and women.

Since taking office Rod has:

- Met and marched with Harborview nurses and medical staff in support of their contract negotiation;
- Escorted striking fast-food employees back to work at 5:00am in the morning;
- Signed a letter in support of worker's rights at Harborview; and
- Signed a letter in support of worker's rights of UW Childcare Center workers.

## Increasing Transparency of Elections

Shortly after taking office, Rod met with constituents and learned about their concerns of inadequacies with the process of annual precinct map alterations.



Rod with Sheriff Urquhart.



Rod with members of the King County Sheriff Marine Unit.



Rod and Harborview flight nurses, supporting their rights.



Rod and Chair Gossett marching in support of Harborview employees' rights.

After this meeting, Rod sponsored legislation to make annual precinct alterations available to the public, as it is in the public's interest that voters and political parties have an opportunity to review the proposed adjustments to precinct boundaries before they are transmitted to the council. The Council approved Rod's legislation providing for more public input and review of changes to precinct maps.

## Saving Taxpayer Dollars

A top priority of Rod's is watching out for taxpayer's interest. Here is some of the work he has done in that area:

- Recognizing that solid waste tonnage has decreased in recent years, Rod sponsored an amendment asking the Solid Waste Division to review the 2006 Solid Waste Transfer & Waste Management Plan, to see if the plan is still appropriate for meeting current needs and determining if savings in the system are possible. This review could save \$100 million or more;
- Rod advocated for efficiencies within Metro Transit, before raising fares;
- Voted to save tens of millions of dollars on a levy construction project in the Kent Valley by choosing a low-cost plan supported by the local community;
- Rod serves on the Government Accountability and Oversight Committee to watch over government spending;
- Rod put the brakes on proposed pay hikes for county managers;
- Rod moved his office into an existing surplus conference room, that was already fully furnished, to prevent having to buy any new furniture; and
- Rod has re-used office supplies and furniture for his staff's offices.

## Additional Accomplishments and Areas of Work

There are many other areas where Rod has also made his mark at the County, here are a few additional areas of work and accomplishments:

- Joined the Keep King County Moving Coalition and attended a day of action in Olympia advocating for a state transportation package;
- Working with Metro to ensure successful implementation of Rapid Ride E-Line, from Shoreline to downtown Seattle;
- Co-sponsored legislation enabling the City of Bothell to annex all of its remaining unincorporated property within King County;
- Led on efforts to sell a King County Roads Division surplus facility to Shoreline;
- Worked to remove ads on Metro buses that promoted racial profiling;
- Working closely on the development of the Eastside Rail Corridor;
- Voted to appoint Ketu Shah to the District Court;
- Working to insure local wineries are not subject to overly-burdensome regulations;
- Working with Sound Transit and community groups on light rail planning from the University District through Lynnwood;



Rod escorting fast-food workers back to their jobs @ 5:00AM.



Rod and CM von Reichbauer, before a GAO meeting.



Rod at the Eastside Rail Corridor Celebration.



Rod and other regional leaders, advocating for a state-wide Transportation Package in Olympia.

# Community Outreach

One of the top priorities Councilmember Dembowski has set while in office is to listen and learn from the constituents of District 1. As part of his community outreach plan, Rod has committed to hosting a town hall in every community in District 1, visited every city council, attended numerous meetings, reached out to nearly every neighborhood association, accepted dozens of offers to tour various community sites or organizations and businesses.

## Town Halls

This year, Rod has committed to hosting a town hall meeting in every community in District 1. To date, he has hosted town halls in the communities of: Shoreline with Sheriff John Urquhart, North Seattle with Attorney General Bob Ferguson, Kenmore with Mayor David Baker, and Woodinville with Mayor Bernie Talmas. Rod has also participated in an Eastside Transportation forum town hall and a Korean American Coalition of Washington town hall. These meetings have been a great opportunity for Rod to hear directly from the community.

Everyone who attended the meetings later received a personal email or letter from Rod, thanking them for their attendance. Additionally, each person who had follow-up questions had those questions addressed in later constituent correspondence.

In addition to the meetings that have already taken place, on September 19<sup>th</sup> Rod will join King County Assessor Lloyd Hara for a town hall meeting in Lake Forest Park at Third Place Commons. The town hall will be an opportunity for constituents to discuss property valuations, taxes, appeals, and the services that the Department of Assessments provides to assist King County property owners. Additional town hall meetings will be scheduled soon in Bothell and Kirkland.



*Rod answering constituents concerns at the Korean American Coalition of Washington town hall.*



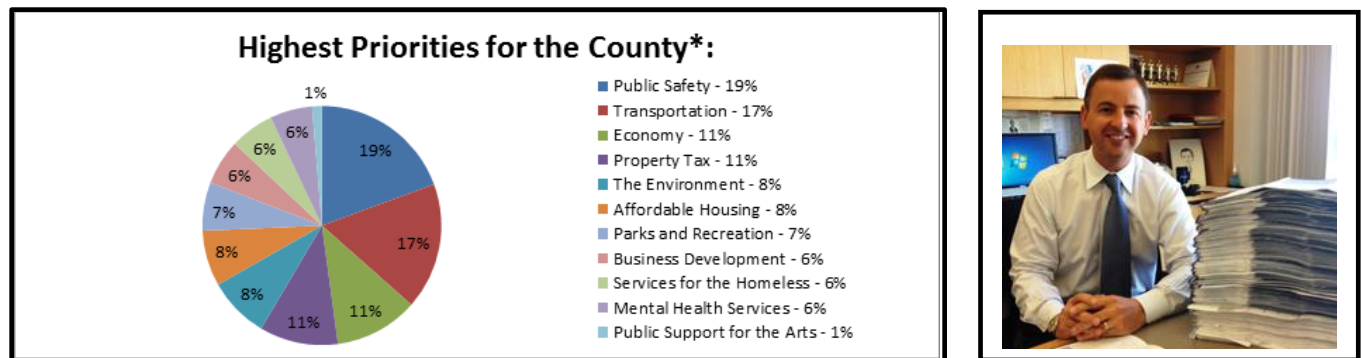
*Above: At the North Seattle Town Hall, Attorney General Ferguson and Rod were honored to be joined by Amy Freedheim, King County's Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney for Felony Traffic. Below: Rod at the Shoreline Town Hall.*



## Spring 2013 Constituents' Survey

In May, Rod sent out his first constituents' survey to households in District 1. The survey was sent to more than 60,000 households in the district, and to date more than 2,300 residents have responded.

The results were compiled into an easy to read one page sheet of information. That can be viewed by clicking [here](#). This information will also be mailed to everyone who responded.



Above: Resident's responses to question #1 on the survey as well as a picture of Rod with a stack of survey responses!

## Neighborhood Meetings

Another aspect of Rod's community outreach work includes reaching out to neighborhood associations, local service organizations, and various community groups, to discuss their issues of concern.

Here are just a few of the groups and organizations Rod has met with in his first six months:

- Kiwanis Club of North Seattle
- Finn Hill Neighborhood Alliance
- Northeast District Council
- Maple Leaf Community Council
- Echo Lake Neighborhood Association
- Richmond Beach Neighborhood Association
- Ridgecrest Neighborhood Association
- Richmond Highlands Neighborhood Association
- Pro-Shoreline
- Kenmore Community Council
- Shoreline Rotary
- Shoreline Breakfast Rotary
- Kenmore Uplake Neighborhood Association
- Northshore Rotary
- Woodinville Rotary Club
- Juanita Neighborhood Association
- View Ridge Community Council



Rod speaking to the Northshore Rotary.

 Kirkland Association of Neighborhoods

These meetings have given Rod a better appreciation for both the micro and macro issues that are important to the various neighborhoods of District 1.

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## E-News

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Rod began his tradition of monthly e-news updates called "Rod's Report," which are emailed to a list of over 26,000 King County residents.

These reports give an update on the latest work of the King County Council, inform readers on ways to get involved on various boards and commissions, and update residents of the most current community events.

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## Friday District 1 Days

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Although District 1's community outreach is extensive, the office still receives several phone calls and numerous emails from constituents who have questions for Rod, many of whom request time to meet with the Councilmember. In general, the King County Courthouse is not the most accessible location. Given that Council District 1 expands as far north as Shoreline and as far east as Woodinville, it is difficult for many residents to make the commute for a meeting at the Courthouse.

Rod makes it a priority to have Friday District 1 Days, where he spends part of the day in the district, meeting with local business owners, engaging in community issues, and touring district facilities. Starting in late October, Rod will host a coffee meeting every Friday in various locations throughout the district.